

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 2, 2022

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul:

Thank you for your steadfast leadership in mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially amid the rise of the Omicron variant. I appreciate your Administration's diligence in helping to curb this issue, including your commitment to supply ten million tests per month for NYC students. With the Biden Administration's announcement to purchase 500 million additional COVID-19 at-home rapid tests, I respectfully ask that you continue to equitably disperse the incoming tests, particularly to vulnerable populations in high-congregate areas for essential workers, senior citizens, and domestic violence and homeless shelters.

According to health experts, COVID-19 tests are the most effective screening tool and are critical to combatting this pandemic. Accessibility to at-home COVID-19 tests allows New Yorkers to test frequently and safely from their homes. This is particularly important to low-income seniors living in Section 202 Housing and unhoused people living in over-crowded shelters.¹ Because of the close proximity of the living conditions and the highly transmissible nature of the Omicron variant, the chances of mass infection are high. Seniors and unhoused persons are also more likely to have underlying conditions which make them more vulnerable to harsh COVID symptoms.

It is also crucial that tests are made available to essential workers such as transportation drivers and childcare providers. New Yorkers in these fields are constantly in contact with several people. Currently, children aged 5-17 are eligible for COVID vaccinations, though the FDA has yet to approve vaccines for younger children. This means that daycare providers who watch kids in this age bracket are interacting with children that are not protected against the virus. Accessible testing ensures that workers are not infecting others while feeling doing their jobs. As you know, New Yorkers have been subject to hour-long wait times at COVID testing sites and fruitless searches for at-home tests at pharmacies. The shortage has even prompted people to turn to third-party suppliers on social media.² Accessible at-home tests for childcare providers and transportation

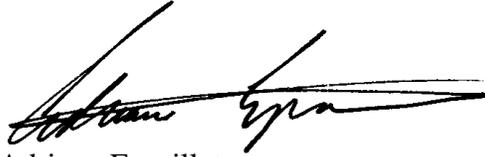
¹ Newman, A. (2021, December 23). *Virus surges in New York City's homeless shelters*. The New York Times. Retrieved January 14, 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/23/nyregion/homeless-shelters-covid-cases.html>

² Kelly, S. M. (2022, January 10). *People desperate for Covid tests are turning to resellers online*. CNN. Retrieved January 14, 2022, from <https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/07/tech/at-home-covid-19-test-shortage/index.html>

drivers mean undisrupted travel and care services for millions of New York families who depend on them.

In summary, this highly transmissible COVID-19 variant, though considered mild to some, is still deadly for those with disabilities and underlying health conditions. To fight this virus, it is important that everyone, particularly vulnerable populations, have equitable access to COVID-19 at-home tests. I am eager to continue to work with your administration to combat this pandemic. Thank you for your continued leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adriano Espailat", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Adriano Espailat
Member of Congress